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Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-12 SES-02 SAA-01
SSM-03 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 /075 W
----------013872 091602Z /45
O 091426Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9153
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4588

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR UN LE IS SY PINS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: REMARKS OF UNIFIL'S POLITICAL ADVISOR,
JEAN-CLAUDE AIME

1. UNIFIL'S POLITICAL ADVISOR, JEAN-CLAUDE AIME, CAME BY EMBASSY AT ABOUT 1300 HOURS. HE COULD ONLY STAY ABOUT A HALF-HOUR BECAUSE HE WAS GOING TO NAQURA TO JOIN ERSKINE IN MEETING WITH EYTAN, WHOM ERSKINE HAD BEEN TRYING TO SEE FOR SOME TIME. SOME OF AIME'S REMARKS:

2. SOLUTIONS.

A. AS A POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT IMPASSE, AIME SAID, UNIFIL HAD PROPOSED TO THE LEBANESE THAT THEY SEND DOWN ANOTHER BATTALION DIRECTLY TO TIBNIN THROUGH NABATIYAH, WHILE LEAVING THE PRESENT BATTALION MORE OR LESS IN ITS PRESENT LOCATION. THE LEBANESE HAD NOT YET RESPONDED.

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B. THIS SECOND BATTALION WOULD HAVE TO PASS THROUGH PLO COUNTRY, AND THE LEBANESE IN CONTRAST TO THEIR PRESENT PERFORMANCE, WOULD HAVE TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK AHEAD OF TIME. THE PALESTINIANS MIGHT COOPERATE, BUT IT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO DO SO. AIME HAD TALKED WITH PLO OFFICIALS IN BEIRUT THIS MORNING, AND THEY HAD COMPLAINED THAT HADDAD HAD SHELLED

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HASBAYA ON AUGUST 6. THEY HAD
PROMISED TO CONTINUE TO COOPERATE, BUT HAD WARNED THAT
QUESTION OF HADDAD MUST BE SETTLED. AIME COMMENTED THAT
HE BELIEVED ARAFAT WAS UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE FROM
HIS LIEUTENANTS NOT TO COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL.

3. HADDAD.

A. AIME DID NOT EXPECT THE MEETING WITH
EYTAN TO GO WELL. HE SAID ISRAELIS WERE BASING THEIR
ENTIRE STRATEGY IN SOUTH LEBANON ON HADDAD AND MAKING
HIS FORMAL REINSTATEMENT IN THE LEBANESE ARMY THE
KEY ISSUE. BEN GAL HAD TOLD UNIFIL, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT HADDAD'S
REINSTATEMENT WAS ESSENTIAL. AIME THOUGHT THE ISRAELIS
WOULD FIND IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL THE
MILITIAS IN THE AREA WITH HADDAD GONE. I
EXPRESSED MY SKEPTICISM THAT ISRAELIS COULD ACTUALLY
EXPECT GOL TO REINSTATE HADDAD AFTER WHAT HE HAD DONE
AND ASKED WHETHER THE LATTER WAS SANE. AIME SAID HE
MIGHT BE "A LITTLE NUTS."

B. AIME BELIEVED ISRAELIS GAVE HADDAD SOME
FREEDOM OF ACTION BECAUSE THIS SUITED THEIR PURPOSES.
WHEN ASKED IF THE ISRAELIS COULD BRING HADDAD INTO
LINE IF THEY WISHED -- GET HIM TO COOPERATE WITH THE
DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO TIBNIN AND DROP HIS
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DEMANDS FOR REINSTATEMENT -- AIME SEEMED ASTOUNDED
AT SUCH A NAIVE QUESTION. AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE:
"OF COURSE, THEY CONTROL ALL HIS LINES OF SUPPLY."

C. AIME SAID HADDAD HAD NEVER CONTEMPLATED
ACCEPTING ANY OF THE LEBANESE OFFERS TO LEAVE SOUTH
LEBANON. AIME CHARACTERIZED HADDAD AS SINCERE AND AS
BELIEVING THAT HE WAS REALLY DEFENDING THE CHRISTIANS
AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS. MOREOVER,
HADDAD'S THREAT TO DECLARE THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES
INDEPENDENT WAS NOT COMPLETELY HOLLOW. HE MIGHT ACTUALLY
DO SO. HADDAD HAD SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT AMONG CHRISTIANS
IN THE AREA, AND AIME NOTED THAT THREE DAYS AGO THE
GREEK CATHOLIC BISHOP OF MARJAYUN HAD BLESSED HADDAD'S TANKS.

4. A LEBANESE BATTALION.

A. THE MORALE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY BATTALION AT
KAWKABA WAS VERY POOR. MANY UNIFIL OFFICERS BELIEVED
THAT SOME OF THE SOLDIERS WOULD BEGIN TO DESERT,
ALTHOUGH NONE HAD DONE SO FAR. SOME OF THE UNIFIL
OFFICERS ALSO BELIEVED THAT COL. ADIB SA'AD WOULD NOT

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LAST ANOTHER 10 DAYS, AND THAT HE MIGHT WELL DECIDE TO
RETURN TO HAPPIER GROUNDS IN BEIRUT.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 4588

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 5 AUGUST 1 VICE AUGUST 4)

B. THE BATTALION WAS LUCKY NOT TO HAVE SUFFERED 60 CASUALTIES
INSTEAD OF SIX ON AUGUST 7. THE BATTALION HAD NOT TAKEN THE
MOST RUDIMENTARY MEASURES TO PROTECT ITSELF. INSTEAD OF
DIGGING IN, THE SOLIDERS WERE JUST SITTING AROUND IN TRUCKS.
THE NEPALESE HAD BEEN SHELLED AS MUCH AS THE LEBANESE, BUT
THE NEPALESE HAD TAKEN NO CASUALTIES BECAUSE THEY WERE DUG
IN.

C. TO PROTECT HIS TROOPS, SA'AD PLANNED TO MOVE TWO-THIRDS
OF THEM SEVEN TO TEN KILOMETERS TO THE NORTH. ONLY ABOUT
200 WOULD REMAIN IN KAWKABA, SOME SOLDIERS HAD ALREADY MOVED
NORTH.

D. THE LEBANESE BATTALION WAS ABSOLUTELY INCAPABLE OF FIGHTING
ITS WAY TO TIBNIN. IF IT TRIED, THE LEBANESE SOLDIERS WOULD BE
SLAUGHTERED.

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E. AIME ALSO WARNED THAT IF THE BATTALION DECIDED TO MOVE BY HELICOPTER TO TIBNIN, IT SHOULD MAKE SURE THAT IT HAD THE AGREEMENT OF ISRAEL FIRST. OTHERWISE, HADDAD AND HIS MEN WERE LIKELY TO FIRE ON THEM.

5. A FINAL NOTE. AIME NOTED THAT NEITHER GENERAL CUQ NOR ANYONE ALSE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PERSUADE THE LEBANESE NOT TO TAKE THE MARJAYUN ROUTE. UNIFIL AND THE ISRAELIS HAD TOLD THE LEBANESE IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS NOT TO GO THIS WAY, BUT THE LEBANESE HAD BLITHELY IGNORED THESE WARNINGS. EVEN ADIB SA'AD HAD TOLD KHOURY THAT THAT BATTALION SHOULD NOT DEPLOY WITHOUT A ROAD RECONNAISSANCE FIRST, BUT HAD BEEN ORDERED TO GO AHEAD ANYWAY. AIME SPECULATED THAT LEBANESE DECIDED TO MOVE SO RAPIDLY IN ORDER TO HAVE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT TO ANNOUNCE ON ARMY DAY, AUGUST 1.
PARKER

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